

Sample Accommodations

The following examples represent accommodations that some AmeriCorps programs have made to help persons with disabilities participate in service. These examples are not designed to be prescriptive, since each individual will need tailored accommodations to address his or her disability. However, these examples can help project planners think about what types of accommodations might be necessary and budget accordingly.

Mobility Impairment

An AmeriCorps Program works with children ages three to five in school readiness activities with their parents. Members make home visits and coordinate group meetings to facilitate interaction and learning between parents and children. A member who uses a wheelchair joins the program. Meetings between program staff and members are moved to a downstairs room that is accessible because there is no elevator to the upstairs meeting room usually used. When assigning members to families, the Program Director ensures that the member is assigned to families with homes that are moderately accessible (e.g., the member can enter a home without much difficulty by using a portable ramp to wheel up one or two steps at an entrance.)

Learning Disability

Another AmeriCorps program works with Asian refugees to help youth assimilate into their new environment and to teach socialization, school readiness, and English language skills to children. An AmeriCorps member with a learning disability joins the program. After some discussion, the program routinely tapes memos and instructions for all members. All paper documents that are not easily taped are printed in large print and are copied on brightly colored paper.

Visual Impairment

An AmeriCorps program provides community safety workshops in local schools and community based programs. A member who is legally blind conducts the workshops. Occasionally, a second member accompanies her to assist with orientation and direction. All materials for the program are provided on disk, and some of the materials she uses for reference have been Brailled.

Hearing Impairment

An AmeriCorps Program that helps build and maintain trails in local parks and recreation areas recruits a member who is deaf. The program sponsors a training that focuses on effective communication skills so that the other members and program staff are aware of accommodation needs. All instructions are produced in writing. An interpreter is hired to assist the member in meetings and trainings.

Down's Syndrome

An AmeriCorps program that addresses local environmental concerns by coordinating park cleanups and urban gardening projects recruits a member who has Down's Syndrome. Each task that the members are to perform is broken down into several smaller tasks. With the assistance of a job coach from a local agency, the member is provided with one-on-one training on the job. The program director assigns different AmeriCorps members to work "buddy style"

with this member on regularly assigned tasks. The job coach also assists the member in developing relationships with other members.

Diabetes

The schedule for an AmeriCorps program allows for two 10-minute breaks and one half hour lunch break. This does not allow sufficient time for a member with diabetes to test her blood sugar and take insulin if necessary. Nor does this schedule allow her to eat several small "snacks" throughout the day as required to maintain her blood sugar level. The schedule for the program was adjusted so that the member with diabetes was permitted to take five minute breaks at regular intervals throughout the day.

Chemical Sensitivity

An AmeriCorps member is particularly sensitive to chemicals. Through a comprehensive review of the program site, several allergens were removed, and steps were taken to ensure that fresh air was circulated through the site. Members and program staff were trained in emergency procedures for chemical sensitivity. The member was permitted to alter his schedule based on a need to remove himself from the site at different periods during the day. He was also able to make up this time.